

REMARKS

Overview

Claims 1-14 are pending in the current application.

Claims 1-4, 8, 12 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Ripley. Claims 1, 2, 8, 12 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by Knopp. Claims 5-7, 9-11 and 13 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Ripley. Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections, and requests reconsideration of the claims.

Ripley Does Not Anticipate Independent Claims 1, 8 or 14

Independent claim 1 requires "a plurality of structurally identical base units with identical electrical components" and "a plurality of control consoles with at least one different control feature between the consoles". Ripley teaches contrary to these requirements. Specifically, in Ripley, "The interchangeability of a control devices allows a single control console to be used in several appliance models" (col. 1, lines 51-53). Stated differently, "the present invention allows a single console to serve in several appliance models, eliminating the costs associated with providing customized consoles" (Ripley, col. 2, lines 16-19). Applicant's patent requires a plurality of control consoles with different features whereas Ripley claims only a single control console to eliminate costs associated with providing customized consoles. Independent claim 8 requires a plurality of consoles, each having different control features. Independent claim 14 also requires a group of consoles each having different control features. Accordingly, independent claims 1, 8 and 14 distinguish over the Ripley patent so as to be in proper form for allowance.

Claim 1 further requires that the first and second consoles are interchangeable with the base units. Since Ripley has only a single console, there is no teaching or suggestion in Ripley that two different consoles be interchangeable with the base units. Therefore, claim 1 further distinguishes over Ripley.

Independent claim 14 has been amended to provide that the base unit is universal so as to function with all the consoles in the group of consoles, each of which have different control features. Ripley does not teach or suggest such a universal base unit which can be used with different consoles having different features, as required by claim 14. Therefore, claim 14 further distinguishes over the Ripley patent so as to be allowable.

New claim 15 depends from claim 14, and provides for a first console with first controls and a second console with second controls, with the first and second consoles being interchangeably mounted on the base unit to create first and second appliance models having at least one functional difference between the models. Again, Ripley utilizes a unique base to create each appliance model, contrary to the requirement of claim 15. Therefore the universal base unit of claim 15 is, in essence, the opposite of the universal control console of Ripley. In the invention of the present application, a different console is used for each appliance model, as set forth in claim 15. Thus, Ripley teaches away from the invention of claim 15.

Knopp Does Not Anticipate Independent Claims 1, 8 or 14

Independent claim 1 requires "a plurality of base units with identical components" and "a plurality of control consoles with at least one different control feature" as well as "mounting the first control console onto one of the base units to create a first model of the appliance wherein the base unit of the first model includes electrical components that are not electrically connected to

the first control console". Knopp does not teach a plurality of base units with identical components. Neither does Knopp teach a plurality of control consoles with different control features. Lastly, Knopp does not teach mounting the first control console onto one of the base units to create a first model of the appliance, wherein the base unit of the first model includes electrical components that are not electrically connected to the first control console.

The primary object of the Knopp patent is "that only one type of printed circuit board is necessary for the structural set having a control panel capable of being configured in two separate configurations" (col. 1, lines 63-66). Using a single identical printed circuit board "minimizes the number of individual components for the switch console structural sets" (Knopp, col. 1, lines 43-44). Thus, "based on a single type of printed circuit board . . . A different organization of the sequence of control elements provided on the control panel thereby results in two configurations for the control panel" (Knopp, col. 2, lines 4-6 and 10-12). In summary, Knopp uses identical printed circuit boards to create control consoles with different appearances, but not different control features. Knopp makes no mention of a plurality of base units with identical components as required by claim 1. Knopp simply teaches a different organization of the sequence of control elements rather than different control features as required by claim 1. And, Knopp does not teach mounting a first control console onto a base unit to create a first model of appliance with some component electrically disconnected. Knopp merely makes use of identical printed circuit boards to organize the control elements differently (mirror-symmetrical pattern) (col. 1, lines 59-62).

Independent claim 8 also requires a purchase to select a control console from a plurality of consoles having different features, for operating components in a base unit and then mounting control console onto the base unit to create the assembled appliance. As discussed above with

respect to claim 1, Knopp does not meet this limitation. Also, Knopp does not teach that the consumer selects the console before the console is mounted on the base, as in claim 8.

Independent claim 14 is similar to claim 1 in requiring less than all the electrical components being connected between the console and base. This limitation is not taught or suggested by Knopp.

Accordingly, independent claims 1, 8 and 14 distinguish over the Knopp patent so as to be in proper form for allowance. Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1, and 9-13 depend from claim 8 and should be allowable as depending from allowable base claims.

Ripley Does Not Make Obvious Dependent Claims 5-7, 9-11 and 13

Applicant's invention requires a plurality of control consoles with different control features whereas Ripley is specifically limited to a single control console to serve in several appliance models, eliminating the costs associated with providing customized consoles. The Examiner asserts that it is an obvious matter of design choice to mount the console at the retail establishment, the appliance dealer or the purchaser's home. Applicant respectfully traverses this assertion. Providing a plurality of control consoles all being capable of being mounted upon a single base unit solves several problems, and unexpected results are obtained. In particular, retailers can stock and provide their customers with an extensive array of different models by simply carrying the various control consoles for each model. The control consoles require very little storage space as compared to the base unit for each model. This would allow the retailer to carry a limited number of base units and a variety of control consoles for the consumer's choice, thus increasing storage space and decreasing the retailer's overhead. Also, such an arrangement would allow a customer to upgrade the console even after the sale and/or installation of the

console. Additionally, such an arrangement would allow the manufacturer to change the appliance later in the production or the resale process from one model type to another model type. Moreover, the model type could be selected late in production or even at the time of the sale of the appliance. Such an arrangement would allow retailers to reduce the number of unique models and inventory within the supply chain. Additionally, assembly line efficiencies for the manufacturer could be increased by producing the same base unit every time. Ultimately, the consumer would have immediate access to dozens of different models, the retailer would only have to stock a limited number of bases and the customer and retailer both could avoid the undesirable delay and extra cost associated with expediting delivery of an unstocked model. These problems are solved by the present invention, but not by Ripley. It is more than a design choice. Therefore, neither Ripley, alone or in combination with Examiner's design choice assertion discloses the limitations required by claims 5-7, 9-11 and 13. Therefore, the rejections to claims 5-7, 9-11 and 13 should be withdrawn.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, Applicant respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance be issued. No fees or extensions of time are believed to be due in connection with this amendment; however, consider this a request for any extension inadvertently omitted, and charge any additional fees to Deposit Account No. 26-0084.

Reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


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